

May 9, 1975

PRESIDENT: Senator Schmit.

SENATOR SCHMIT: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, I'm sorry the bill was advanced also the day that I wasn't here. It was unfortunate that I could not be here. I believe that we need to be concerned about the water resources. I want to point out . . . and I appreciate very much Senator Bereuter's amendment. I didn't get a chance to read the names of the men and perhaps the lady who voted to advance this bill. Again we're getting back to something that we've talked about many, many, many times. Who controls the water. To whom does the water belong? The underground water that lies beneath my farm and everyone else's farm . . . to whom do we want to give the authority, the discretionary authority, to determine what happens to that water? It is no secret that a good producing irrigation well can double the valuation of a piece of farmland. Before you pass this bill I want you to recognize that when you pass the bill, and when you've asked with the Natural Resources Board of Directors, which essentially boils down to the manager, if you will check the management of the natural resources associations you will find some very qualified men. You will find some who have had no technical experience in the area of water resource management. When you vest that authority, basically in one man, you have given to one man the authority and the responsibility to determine if a piece of property shall be worth \$500 an acre or \$1000 an acre. I ask you this, ladies and gentlemen, before you further advance this bill, it's easy to stand here today and say we have a crisis in the area of water development. You know a crisis just doesn't occur suddenly. We only discover it suddenly. All too often we react just as suddenly and perhaps improperly. I want to point out that many areas today that are being subjected to irrigation were considered totally unfit for irrigation only five years ago. I want to point out also that there's going to be the development of irrigation land in Nebraska to an extent far beyond our own comprehension at this time. I want to ask you if you had invested in a piece of land would you want to be the person to have to go to the hired man in an area that is in many cases large and not very totally well associated with each, would you want to go to one man and ask him for permission to drill a well? Now you're going to counteract and you're going to say that's not true . . . the Board of Directors. I say the Board of Directors, bunk! The Board of Directors are not going to be able to determine every single facet of this sort of an operation. I have watched them. I have watched them closely. I have cooperated with the Natural Resources District I think far more than they have cooperated with me. I intend to have some more of that cooperation, willingly or unwillingly. I think most of it will be willingly. I'd like to say this, it is awfully easy for us to sit here today and give away the responsibility for that piece of property, the responsibility for the right to drill a well, the responsibility for an individual land owner to enhance his own property, to increase his method of earning a livelihood, to increase the resources available to his family. We have, on May 1st of this year, the real estate taxes come due. A lot of people voted for this bill who